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Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Letter dated 16 August 2010 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

From 16 to 18 June 2010, the Government of Brazil held a seminar in Rio de Janeiro, entitled "A new horizon for UN peacekeeping: perspectives from the South". I have the honour to enclose the concept note prepared for the seminar and a summary of the conclusions reached (see annex). I would like to underline that the summary reflects the discussions held at the event, and not necessarily the positions of the Government of Brazil, the Secretariat of the United Nations or any specific participant.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 33.

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Annex to the letter dated 16 August 2010 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

"A new horizon for UN peacekeeping: perspectives from the South", 16 to 18 June 2010

16-18 June 2010, Rio de Janeiro*

Summary

Introduction

1. From 16 to 18 June 2010, a seminar entitled "A new horizon for UN peacekeeping: perspectives from the South" was held in Rio de Janeiro, as a joint initiative of the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations and the Secretariat of the United Nations, with the support of the Brazilian Ministry of Defence and the Brazilian National War College. The seminar brought together more than 60 participants from 23 developing countries, including large troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as host countries to peacekeeping operations. It was presided over by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the Ministry of External Relations of Brazil, Ambassador Vera Machado. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, and the United Nations Military Adviser for Peacekeeping Operations, Lieutenant General Chikadibia Obiakor, also participated.

2. The seminar focused on the key issue of sustainability as a strategic challenge in peacekeeping operations today, taking into account that such operations depend on the quick and efficient deployment of sufficient and adequate material and human resources, without which the fulfilment of peacekeeping mandates could be jeopardized. The participants further considered that the sustainability of peacekeeping operations depends on support from the local population and the Government. In their critical examination of the United Nations peacekeeping operations that face severe difficulties, the participants identified probable causes, including lack of understanding of the local reality, rejection by the local population or insufficient local involvement in peacebuilding efforts. The question of sustainability of field operations was consequently considered as being directly related to the issue of the sustainability of peace following the departure of the troops.

3. The seminar included two plenary sessions, followed by meetings of three simultaneous working groups dealing with each of the following thematic areas: peacekeeping and the socio-economic elements of peacebuilding; the use of force and local support for peacekeeping operations; and building support for peacekeeping through public outreach. The discussions recognized that: (a) peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes must develop together in order to ensure sustainable and lasting peace; (b) peacekeepers must perform certain peacebuilding tasks; (c) leadership and accurate understanding of local traditions are important tools for the adequate use of force; (d) the protection of civilians is not

* The concept note prepared for the seminar is attached as an enclosure to the present report.

only a legal duty, but a moral obligation; (e) communications and public relations are crucial for a successful peacekeeping operation.

4. The main points discussed in the three working groups are summarized as follows:

A. Peacekeeping and the socio-economic elements of peacebuilding

5. Working Group A recognized that peacebuilding should include such socio-economic activities as economic revitalization, youth employment, the development of infrastructure and the provision of basic services. For any peacebuilding activity to be sustainable, peacebuilders must work with the Government, rather than in its stead. Ownership was therefore key to the sustainability of peace efforts.

6. Peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts should be implemented in parallel, not in sequence. Peacebuilding activities should be performed from the beginning of the deployment of a peacekeeping operation. Beyond inherent gains, this could help reduce the duration of the troops' presence and the risk of relapse into conflict, thereby reducing the overall cost of United Nations engagement in the country.

7. The Group recognized that, if the United Nations was to ensure a smooth transition from security to development and reduce the risk of relapse into conflict, peacekeeping operations should not become a development tool but must play a role in peacebuilding. It was noted that there was growing agreement on such ideas at the United Nations, both among Member States and within the Secretariat; however, consensus was yet to be reached on how to achieve them.

8. It was highlighted that strengthening national police institutions was crucial to ensuring stability after the withdrawal of troops. The United Nations police were instrumental in supporting institutional reform and building host State police capacity.

9. Recommendations were made on how peacekeepers could be involved in peacebuilding tasks. The Group considered three ways in which peacekeepers might act as early peacebuilders: enabling national and international actors to implement peacebuilding tasks; coordinating with the Government and other partners; and implementing certain peacebuilding tasks.

10. The Group recognized the importance of quick-impact projects in providing the local population with peace dividends. In that regard, it was suggested that the scope of such projects should be streamlined to make them more effective and that they could be implemented using resources from the Peacebuilding Fund, which would give them a longer lifespan. Small-scale infrastructure projects, such as small power stations, should be given priority when developing quick-impact projects.

11. The civilian component of missions should have sufficient capacity to assist the Government in early capacity-building, including in economic revitalization and the restoration of core Government functions. This would help to consolidate State authority.

12. The peacebuilding tasks implemented by peacekeepers could have a more significant impact if there was greater coordination with other peacebuilding partners.

13. Multilateral engagement should be combined with bilateral cooperation. Regional organizations and international financial institutions could also be brought in to increase available resources. Several practical examples were highlighted: in Haiti, Brazilian bilateral cooperation enabled the contingent to use some of its spare engineering capacity and in Sierra Leone, Pakistani and Jordanian battalions were building hospitals and roads.

14. It was recommended that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should disseminate lessons learned and experiences on early peacebuilding tasks performed by peacekeepers. Such experiences should be regularly collected and consolidated in periodic reports.

15. Discussions were held on the importance of involving troop- and police-contributing countries in the discussion of mandates from an early stage. The Peacebuilding Commission should be able to make recommendations to the Security Council on early peacebuilding activities. Peacekeeping operations should be well resourced and staffed to perform those activities, including with civilian personnel.

B. The use of force and local support for peacekeepers

16. Working Group B recognized that there should be greater cohesion between tasks involving possible use of force and the missions mandated political goals. While recognizing the need for further guidance on the use of force by peacekeeping missions, particularly as mandates, including the protection of civilians, became more common, the Group stressed the importance of avoiding micromanagement. Mandates should be clearer, but they remained a political construct. More attention should be given to ensuring that the mission had adequate means to carry out mandated tasks requiring the use of force.

17. The Group stressed that the concept of the use of force in self-defence as well as in defence of the mandate should be well understood. Adequate use of force at the tactical level depended on a correct understanding of relevant circumstances at the higher levels of the mission. It was further stressed that proper understanding of the local environment and effective integration within the mission's leadership were critical.

18. There was consensus among the Group concerning the importance of managing expectations in a context of limited resources. Sustainable peace dividends were a key factor in ensuring that the use of force was perceived as legitimate. Mismanagement of expectations could even pose security challenges and affect civilians. It was important that the presence of a peacekeeping force should be followed promptly by an improvement in the conditions of living of the local population.

19. The Group noted that proper use of force against spoilers was an important element of local support. Failure to use force could be as detrimental to the mission's image as the excessive use of force.

20. The use of force in specific situations, such as demonstrations, raised a number of questions regarding the relationship with locals and therefore required adequate planning and means. Avoiding collateral damage was a key element in that regard.

21. The Group noted that, in many cases, peacekeeping operations needed to demonstrate overwhelming force. Under such circumstances, it was essential to have

effective command, to avoid improper use of force. The difference between deterrence and the actual use of force should be clearly understood at all levels. The use of force in peacekeeping operations should always be precise, timely and proportional.

22. There was discussion on the relation between the use of force and the principle of impartiality. It was suggested that peacekeeping operations should inform the local population about operations possibly involving the use of force, since that could influence the local population's perception of the mission.

23. The Group noted that peacekeepers must be well-equipped and must undergo professional training before deployment. It recognized that most peacekeepers received a good level of training in their national armies. It was suggested, nonetheless, that the United Nations should work in close cooperation with States to adjust their national training and orientation programmes, if necessary.

24. The Group noted that situation-specific exercises, induction training, manuals based on concrete information and lessons learned could be used to further improve training standards.

25. It was suggested that joint training centres and international networks of national centres should be created to facilitate cooperation and the exchange of best practices.

26. The importance of training the trainers was highlighted, including as a means of further standardizing procedures, while taking into account the primary responsibility of the troop-contributing countries.

27. Regarding the protection of civilians, the Group recognized that it was first and foremost the responsibility of the State. At the same time, it was a moral obligation inherent to peacekeeping, particularly when national capacity to protect civilians was limited. In that sense, the mission must use force to protect civilians facing imminent physical violence, within its capabilities and its geographical jurisdiction. The Group stressed that further clarification of legal aspects was needed, mainly with respect to the correct identification of actors and the circumstances under which force must be applied to protect civilians. Intelligence, mobility and compatibility between goals and available resources were identified as critical aspects.

28. The Group noted the importance of the preventive dimension of protection of civilians. The role of the United Nations police and the need to strengthen local police were identified as key aspects of the issue.

C. Building support for peacekeeping through public outreach

29. Working Group C recognized the important role of outreach, strategic communication, and coherent public affairs policies in the success of peacekeeping missions. However, that importance was not always properly reflected in the mandates and budgets of operations or even in doctrinal documents.

30. Public information and communication were essential not only to guarantee the political sustainability of the mission locally, but also to carry out other mandated tasks, such as the protection of civilians.

31. Senior mission leader courses and similar training programmes should include media training (how to give interviews and hold press conferences, etc.) and should emphasize how to create mission-wide public information strategies.

32. Mission outreach and communications should be conducted by specialized professionals. There was a deficit of military and police public information officers. Troop- and police-contributing countries should be encouraged to provide professionally trained media officers as part of their contingents, and all communications officers should be integrated to ensure consistency.

33. Departments that deal directly with local populations, such as public information and civil affairs, must be adequately staffed and funded not only at the mission, but also at Headquarters. In particular, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations required a more robust public information capability to enable it to better address peacekeeping-specific issues where the Department of Public Information did not have a comparative advantage.

34. Public information should not be a one-way street. Missions should be able and willing to listen to and interact with local populations through interactive radio ("open microphone"), text messaging, public meetings with civil society, etc. Special attention should be given to the possible use of opinion polls to periodically evaluate the local population's feeling towards the mission. Opinion polls should be held once a year, and the results used to inform the mission's communication strategy and evaluate its effectiveness in carrying out mandated tasks. When opinion polling was not financially, politically or technically viable, other tools such as focus groups and more limited surveys, should be considered.

35. A truly effective communication strategy would seek to use all viable means to establish communication with the local population, such as radio, television and text messaging. Innovative ways of using communications should also be considered. For example, multimedia centres had been used to great effect in Haiti, not only to aid mission communications, but to foster a national dialogue and further the development of civil society.

36. Radio could be an extremely powerful tool for establishing dialogue with local populations and engaging with sectors that opposed or had misgivings regarding the peacekeeping mission. Programming should be carefully tailored to the potential audience. The effectiveness of radio depended on the situation. If a large and sophisticated radio market already existed (for example, in Lebanon), the usefulness of United Nations radio would be more limited.

37. The Security Council and Member States should give greater political support to peacekeeping public information components in general and United Nations radio stations in particular. One way of doing that would be for the Security Council to include the creation of a United Nations radio station in the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

38. When host Governments were reluctant to implement the provisions of status-of-mission or status-of-forces agreements regarding the concession of radio frequencies, the Security Council and interested States should support the Secretariat in political negotiations to encourage timely and proper implementation and address the concerns of the host State.

39. The success of a United Nations radio station and its acceptance would be much improved if care was taken not to alienate local media by competing for advertising revenue or "poaching" human resources. The development of local media was also an important step, but not necessarily one in which the peacekeeping mission should play a direct role. Other United Nations system organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or independent non-governmental organizations were better suited in that regard.

40. The relationship between peacekeeping missions and other actors such as humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations often included elements of both cooperation and competition and needed to be managed carefully in order to achieve maximum benefits for the local population and reduce overlap. High-level coordination was important, but it needed to be complemented by coordination at the tactical level, particularly among those responsible for public information, to ensure that accurate messages were being transmitted. In the context of Southern countries, there was still limited knowledge and experience of how to deal with civil society. Organizations such as Viva Rio (a Brazilian NGO active in Haiti) were very much the exception, not the rule.

41. There was no easy solution to the dilemma of balancing the impartiality of humanitarian actors, the need to guarantee their security, and military efforts to win hearts and minds. On the other hand, the report entitled "Towards a culture of security and accountability", prepared by the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi following the terrorist attack on the United Nations offices in Algiers, highlighted that the United Nations had become a target in several countries because it was no longer perceived as impartial. It was therefore important to focus on how to guarantee adequate security. Strategic communications and outreach represented only part of the solution; what was done in the field and at the political level made the real difference.

42. There was an inherent coordination problem that peacekeeping missions, other United Nations agencies and NGOs had very different methods of funding. In the medium to long term, it was imperative that more work should be done to bring together peacekeeping missions, other United Nations agencies, relevant bilateral partners and international financial institutions, to harmonize their actions.

43. Maintaining support for peacekeeping in troop-contributing countries was also of great importance. The concerns and intensity of public opinion with regard to peacekeeping operations varied from country to country. There was no one-size-fits-all solution to maintaining public support for peacekeeping; however, some principles appeared to be more or less consensual. Efforts to engage the press and public opinion must begin as soon as possible. Those efforts should be very much a partnership among the United Nations, Governments, peacekeeping training centres and regional or language-based organizations. Each partner should engage tactically, according to its specific interest, expertise and capabilities. Ideally, when a country was about to deploy peacekeepers, the United Nations should lend its expertise to the troop-contributing country to help it explain to journalists how a peacekeeping mission functioned, what its mandate would be, why the troop-contributing country had chosen to participate and so forth.

44. Since 2006, the Brazilian Army Training Centre for Peacekeeping Operations and the local United Nations Information Centre had cooperated in training

journalists to better cover peacekeeping operations and understand how the United Nations system worked. Similar training could be provided at the national and regional levels, using the existing peacekeeping training facilities.

45. It might also be useful to consider low-budget initiatives using the Internet, such as e-learning for journalists or a resource hub for the press. United Nations information centres could play a very positive role in that regard, acting on a national and local scale to increase public support for financial and personnel contributions to peacekeeping. That role should be taken into account when studying the possibility of creating new United Nations information centres or allocating resources in the existing network of such centres worldwide.

Enclosure

Concept note

1. Over the past year, discussions at the United Nations regarding the future of peacekeeping operations have consistently pointed to the need to examine the strategic challenges, including sustainability.

2. The non-paper "A new partnership agenda: charting a new horizon for UN peacekeeping" notes that the long-term sustainability of peacekeeping operations depends not only on the availability of human and material resources, but also on local support. The non-paper recognizes that in the past, the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping has been hampered by ineffective communication, often exacerbated by a limited understanding of local culture, the diversity of views in the population, and divisions along ethnic, gender and other lines. As a result, missions at times fail to manage expectations, to adapt to real and perceived needs on the ground, and to sustain local support.

3. The Rio de Janeiro seminar, entitled "A new horizon for UN peacekeeping: perspectives from the South", will deal with how to promote local support and ensure sustainable progress over time. The objectives of peacekeeping operations are not always conceived with a view to sustainability; their gains may well be eroded, or even completely reversed, shortly after the mission departs.

4. The issue of sustainability needs to be tackled head on as a primary challenge, not as an afterthought. There must be a full "staying strategy" before there is an "exit strategy", which includes laying down the socio-economic foundations for peace and stability. A mission needs to be concluded in such a manner as to prevent the need to recall the peacekeepers.

5. The seminar will focus on the following three thematic areas:

A. Peacekeeping and the socio-economic elements of peacebuilding

6. Peacekeeping mandates have increasingly incorporated peacebuilding tasks, particularly in support of the rule of law. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is such an example: its mandate includes, inter alia, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, good governance, the organization of elections, and improving judicial and correctional systems.

7. Consolidating a role for United Nations peacekeeping in the socio-economic aspects of peacebuilding has proven more elusive. In cases where they have tackled such aspects, peacekeeping operations have not implemented wide-ranging structural changes, but have taken a more targeted approach through such actions as helping to rebuild essential infrastructure and local capacity and guaranteeing basic health and sanitation to vulnerable groups.

8. The difficulty in reaching a consensus on the role of peacekeeping in peacebuilding is due in part to the lack of clarity regarding the relationship between security and development. While many agree that the two are interdependent, further discussion is needed on the level of security required to begin the process of sustainable development. It is also essential to identify which development-oriented

activities should be undertaken in order to consolidate gains in the security area and thus make progress possible.

9. There is still some confusion regarding the concept of "peacebuilding". Some believe that it refers exclusively to actions regarding the rule of law, political reconciliation and institution-building, while others believe that it includes all the elements required to build a lasting peace, including social and economic initiatives. Distinction should be made between short-, medium- and long-term activities typically undertaken by development agencies. Though not necessarily sufficient for long-term development, short-term projects can be essential to generating support on the ground for peacekeeping operations.

10. The role of peacekeepers in assisting with peacebuilding is a related topic. The report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (the Brahimi report) (A/55/305-S/2000/809) stated that it is the task of the operation's peacekeepers to maintain a secure local environment for peacebuilding, and the peacebuilders' task to support the political, social and economic changes that create a secure environment that is self-sustaining. That view is echoed by the "New horizon" non-paper, which notes that in other peacebuilding areas, such as the provision of basic services, peacekeepers may be called on to support others as part of an integrated effort. Experience has shown that, at the very least, peacekeepers become enablers of peacebuilding activities on the ground.

Questions participants may wish to consider

11. **What are the priorities for socio-economic development in the immediate post-conflict period?** Ideally, socio-economic activities will contribute to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. For example, building schools can assist the demobilization of child soldiers; creating economic opportunity facilitates disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and road reconstruction can make patrolling easier and help attract private investment.

12. **Which tasks should be carried out mainly by peacekeepers?** Peacekeepers do not usually have specific training in supporting socio-economic development (although national armed forces sometimes do such work in home countries). They are, however, the first on the ground and can engage in restricted areas where civilians have limited access for safety reasons. In some cases, such tasks are needed to emphasize that the mission's role is not merely coercive. With respect to medium- and long-term efforts, there will be other actors more suited to carrying forward peacebuilding tasks.

13. **How will the role of peacekeepers evolve over the length of a mission?** The role of peacekeepers in creating an environment conducive to development is most evident in the early stages of a mission, when other actors are not yet on the ground or are constrained by security risks. Nevertheless, in the medium to long term, the local population or political factions may begin to resent the mission, and it may be best for peacekeepers to continue to implement quick-impact projects and other social activities to ensure local support.

B. The use of force and local support for peacekeeping operations

14. The troop and police contingents of peacekeeping operations are often called upon to carry out a wide variety of law enforcement tasks, such as crowd control, intelligence-gathering, or arresting criminals. Some of these require the use of force.

15. There is already a fair amount of consensus regarding guidelines for the use of force by peacekeeping missions. In almost any situation and even with the best of intentions, recourse to violence produces fear and suspicion. Insecurity usually arises among the population when force is employed by foreign troops against illegal groups. The use of force by peacekeepers must not only be restrained, predictable and proportionate, but also clearly explained to the population. Should the peacekeepers be perceived as resorting to force arbitrarily, the mission will not receive the much needed cooperation of the population.

16. More needs to be done to ensure that any display of force reinforces rather than undermines the idea that the "Blue Helmets" will stand by the local population and "make a difference" on the ground.

17. The inability or unwillingness of peacekeepers to use force when required can also be damaging to missions and to the Organization, as past experience has shown. On the one hand, a population facing threats or actual attacks by armed groups simply cannot understand why blue helmets stand by as atrocities are committed. On the other, it is a fact that peacekeepers cannot protect "all from everything at all times".

Questions participants may wish to consider

18. **Is the relationship between the use of force and local support for peacekeeping missions properly understood?** Are peacekeepers, from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Force Commander to the troops, aware of the implications of the use of force on local support for the mission and, consequently, on the operation's political effectiveness? Does present training adequately take this into account?

19. **Are missions and contingents properly trained to avoid unnecessary force?** What kind of experiences have peacekeeping operations had using non-lethal weapons and ammunition? How helpful have these weapons been in reducing the perception that peacekeeping operations are a coercive force?

20 **Do missions properly address the improper use of force?** Are the procedures in place sufficient and appropriate to avoid, identify and punish excessive use of force? Are investigations transparent enough for locals to understand that improper use of force by peacekeepers will not remain unpunished?

21. **What can be done to limit the damage to local support for peacekeepers resulting from the inability to protect "all from everything at all times"?** How can the mission manage expectations and explain the constraints it faces without signalling weakness in the face of spoilers, who might then feel empowered? How can missions dissociate themselves from violence committed by national forces that peacekeepers may have to assist?

C. Building support for peacekeeping through public outreach

22. Managing expectations, adapting to the needs on the ground and sustaining local support for peacekeeping operations are as daunting as they are crucial. Every activity the mission engages in affects how it is perceived. Outreach activities and media relations are key to building and sustaining local support for United Nations peacekeepers. The involvement of a peacekeeping operation in socio-economic development and how it employs force also plays an important role in generating public support, which demonstrates the interconnectedness of the three areas under discussion.

23. In some cases, particularly when the security situation has been consolidated to a point where most citizens do not live under daily threat of violence, peacekeepers can continue to generate goodwill through direct assistance to the population. In the case of Haiti, the local response to small outreach activities has been so positive that the Brazilian contingent annually allocates a modest sum exclusively for "civil-military activities". Bilateral cooperation from the peacekeepers' countries of origin may also reinforce a positive perception among political parties and communities.

24. Protecting the work of humanitarian agents can also improve the image of peacekeepers among recipients of humanitarian aid. However, in cases where the local population is not entirely supportive of a peacekeeping operation, humanitarian workers may wish not to be associated with peacekeepers.

25. Missions must be able to "speak" to the public through media channels, especially radio, in order to convey their values, purposes and strategies. These channels are also important to counter propaganda aimed at inciting violence or undermining the work of the mission. Communication strategies in peacekeeping operations have not yet been given the attention they deserve.

Questions participants may wish to consider

26. **How to ensure that mission leaders are aware of the benefits of outreach activities? What outreach activities can be undertaken with cost-effectiveness and minimal interference to the main tasks of the mission?** Armed forces in certain countries combine core military functions with the provision of basic social services in remote areas. Can United Nations peacekeeping missions draw upon their experiences? Given that the relatively cheap cost of these activities cannot usually be financed by the mission's budget, what financing possibilities are there? Lessons learned must be collected and shared throughout the system.

27. **What is the general assessment of the relationship between peacekeeping and humanitarian agencies?** Greater cooperation between missions and civilian partners could simultaneously reduce misunderstandings, improve perceptions of the mission and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. Missions need to receive adequate training and resources to share their mandates with civilian groups and thereby forge a partnership. What positive results has civil-military cooperation shown? Do commanders see the need to explain to the public why force was necessary and how it was used?

28. **Does the public communication component of a mission have a sufficient mandate and resources to play a key role in public outreach?** How do missions publicize their activities and reach out to communities affected by conflict? What

role do peacekeeping operations have in containing hate media? What lessons have been incorporated into public outreach since the genocide in Rwanda, where local radio was used as a powerful tool in inciting violence?

29. **How can the United Nations media best reach out to the population in countries hosting peacekeeping operations?** Is there a legitimate role for the United Nations media in bringing entertainment and "cultural comfort" to populations that are victims of violence and deprivation? Cultural rights are an essential part of human rights. Cultural activities may also be regarded as particularly effective for violence reduction strategies, as they help to restore community ties, raise awareness of human rights, and serve as a channel for social concerns. How can the United Nations foster the development of local media that will be friendly to its principles and purposes?